

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This Amendment is responsive to the Office Action mailed on December 10, 2007. A petition for a three month extension of time is attached so that the due date is to and including June 10, 2008.

In this Amendment, claim 27 is canceled, and the limitation therein is incorporated into independent claim 15. The amendment to claim 15 does not raise new issues requiring additional search or consideration. Claims 29, 30, and 35 are canceled, and claims 31, 32, and 36 are amended. Claims 57 and 58 are added.

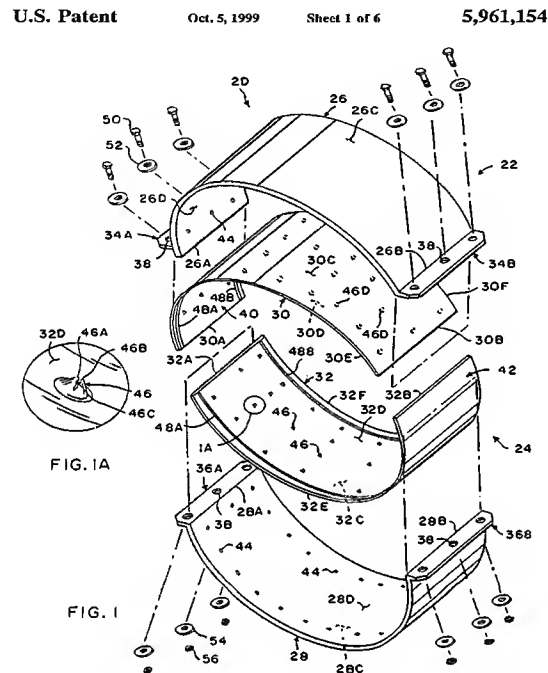
At page 5 of the Office Action, claims 15, 28, 36-39, 41, 44, and 46-56 are rejected over van Vliet (US 4,099,749) and Shea (U.S. 5,383,994). In response, independent claim 15 is amended with the limitation in dependent claim 27. Dependent claim 27 was not rejected over van Vliet and Shea. Independent claim 36 is amended with limitations that are also present in dependent claim 27. Accordingly, this rejection is moot as to the present independent claims.

At page 6 of the Office Action, claims 27, 29-35, and 42-43 are rejected as obvious over van Vliet, Shea, and Williams et al. (U.S. 5,961,154). This rejection is traversed.

Previously submitted dependent claim 27 and current independent claim 15 recite “wherein the tubular outer portion includes apertures, and wherein set screws are disposed in the apertures, and wherein the first and second ducts also comprise a fiber reinforced plastic material.” Independent claim 36 recites “wherein the tubular outer portion includes a curved section comprising apertures, and wherein set screws are disposed in the apertures, and wherein the first and second ducts also comprise a fiber reinforced plastic material.” An example of this is shown in Fig. 1 of the present application (see set screws 34). As explained at paragraph [0032] of the specification, set screws are advantageous as they can join a slip collar and a duct while allowing an adhesive composition to cure.

The Examiner admits that this feature is not taught by van Vliet, Shea, or Williams et al. However, the Examiner appears to rely on the screws 50 in Williams et al. (see FIG. 1 below). The screws 50 are not in a “tubular outer portion” or in a “curved section” of a tubular outer portion. Rather, the screws 50 are in apertures that are present in flat flanges 34B

and 36B. Further, there is no suggestion to modify van Vliet to include set screws 50 in a “tubular outer portion” or in a “curved section” of a tubular outer portion.



Further, in addition to failing to teach or suggest all claim limitations, the base obviousness rejection must combine no less than three references to attempt to arrive at the inventions of even the broadest claims. Applicants submit that the rejections of record are tenuous and request withdraw of the rejections of record.

At pages 6-7 of the Office Action, claim 40 is rejected over van Vliet, Shea, and Nishio (U.S. 6,045,165). This rejection is traversed. Claim 40 is patentable, as it depends on a non-obvious independent claim as explained above.

At page 7 of the Office Action, claim 45 is rejected over van Vliet, Shea, and Narukawa et al. (U.S. 4,433,020). This rejection is traversed. Claim 40 is patentable, as it depends on a non-obvious independent claim as explained above.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance and an action to that end is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 415-576-0200.

Respectfully submitted,

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